

Zika: Back-To-School and New Delaware Cases

DOVER, DE – School is in full swing but the official end of summer does not mean the end of mosquito season. Mosquitoes can breed and bite for another several weeks in Delaware. To prevent the spread of Zika and any mosquito-borne illness, the Division of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) reminds you that stopping the mosquito bite is still the best protection against disease.

Delaware now has 15 Zika cases, including four not previously announced. All cases were caused by mosquito bites while traveling abroad. There is currently no evidence that local mosquitoes are transmitting the illness. All but one of the Delaware Zika cases are in adults and none are pregnant. One of the most recent cases is in an infant who got the illness while traveling abroad. All individuals have recovered well and are showing no long-term effects at this time. Of the 15 Delaware cases, nine are in New Castle County and three each are in Kent and Sussex counties.

It is possible that someone who is traveling abroad and gets bitten by a mosquito carrying Zika virus could bring the disease back to Delaware. A returning traveler carrying Zika could be bitten by a Delaware mosquito that picks up the virus, bites another person and transmits the disease as they feed on their blood. This is likely how Zika spread to south Florida and much of Latin America and the Caribbean. The mosquito of greatest concern in Delaware for possible local transmission of Zika is the Asian tiger mosquito, commonly found where people live, work, and play.

None of the 15 Delaware individuals confirmed with Zika could locally transmit the virus if bitten by a mosquito now. After

about seven days of exposure, the virus clears from the blood so the individual can no longer transmit it to others through a mosquito bite. However, it is still possible for the adults to transmit the disease sexually, and DPH has instructed any provider treating a patient with a positive test on how to prevent sexual transmission.

“At Public Health, our biggest concern remains for pregnant women because we know that a fetus infected with Zika can have devastating consequences,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “We are still telling pregnant women to avoid countries where Zika transmission is active and their sexual partners to be tested if they recently traveled to those areas. If the sexual partner has confirmed Zika, the couple should abstain from sex or use condoms and other barrier methods until the baby is born.”

Women who are trying to become pregnant and have been diagnosed with Zika virus or have symptoms of Zika, should wait at least eight weeks after symptoms first appeared before trying to conceive. Men who have been diagnosed with Zika virus or have symptoms are advised to wait at least six months after symptoms first appeared before having vaginal, oral, or anal unprotected sex.

To learn more about which countries have active Zika visit the [CDC's website here](#). Delaware Public Health and DNREC both provide fact sheets on the Zika virus, as found [here](#).

“Most of us think that once the kids go back to school, we don't need to worry about mosquito bites,” said DNREC Mosquito Control Administrator William Meredith. “But mosquitoes can continue to breed and bite until the first hard frost which can be as late as November. We still need to be vigilant in protecting against bites and reducing mosquito populations.”

To reduce the risk of mosquito bites, use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents; stay in

places with air conditioning or that use window or door screens to keep mosquitoes outside; sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are outside and not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes; treat clothing and gear with permethrin available in pharmacies or purchase permethrin-treated items; and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. And, do not allow any standing water or puddles near your home.

To learn more about how to reduce mosquitoes around your home, two videos with information about Zika virus and backyard water sanitation tips also are available on DNREC's YouTube Channel: [Zika Virus, Mosquitoes and You](#), and [Mosquito Control & Your Backyard](#).

To report intolerable numbers of biting mosquitoes and request local relief, residents are encouraged to call Mosquito Control's field offices:

- Glasgow Office, 302-836-2555, serving New Castle County and the northern half of Kent County, including Dover
- Milford Office, 302-422-1512, serving the southern half of Kent County south of Dover and all of Sussex County
- For more information about Delaware's Mosquito Control program, call the field offices or the main Dover office at 302-739-9917, or visit de.gov/mosquito.

Zika is a generally mild illness caused by a virus primarily transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes. About one in five people infected with the virus develop the disease, and most people who are infected do not develop symptoms. The most common symptoms of Zika virus infection are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). However, while it is often mild, Zika has been linked to serious birth defects in infants whose mothers were infected during the pregnancy and rare but serious health complications in adults.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY

services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.